

*THE CAUSE OF COLOUR
AMONG RACES*

W. SHARPE, M. D.

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THE
CAUSE OF COLOUR AMONG RACES,
AND
THE EVOLUTION OF PHYSICAL BEAUTY.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE CONQUEROR'S DREAM AND OTHER POEMS.

“‘The Conqueror’s Dream’ is a poem of considerable length in blank verse. It presents many vivid and highly poetical fancies, not unusually of a highly poetical imagination. The picture of bodily suffering so true to the life of men with ‘shrivelled faces and their hollow eyes’ could have been written only by a physician who is also a bard to boot. We must especially call attention to ‘The Palm Groves’ and ‘The Warbler and the Bird Collector,’ which are simple and touching poems of no ordinary merit.”—*Public Opinion*.

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DAVID BOGUE, 3, St. Martin's Place.

THE
CAUSE OF COLOUR AMONG RACES,
AND THE
EVOLUTION OF PHYSICAL BEAUTY.

BY
WM. SHARPE, M.D.,
AUTHOR OF 'HUMANITY AND THE MAN,' ETC.



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P R E F A C E.

THE substance of the following pages, which are reprinted from the 'Manchester City Lantern,' with some additional matter, has already appeared in the fourth chapter of the author's work entitled 'Man a Special Creation'; but further investigation has greatly tended to confirm the views there put forward, and has added some important items to the sum of the writer's previous observations on this hitherto neglected but highly interesting subject.

LONDON, *September*, 1879.



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THE
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WE find, not only in the pages of the Bible but in most ancient writings, that white as a colour has always been put forward as a symbol of purity and truth, and of that which is noble and good. The common expressions, being "washed white as snow," and "clad in white raiment," have hitherto, no doubt, been regarded in a spiritual sense, in so far as they referred to regenerated man. But these symbolic expressions we must think had also reference to temporal states of future human attainment; that even in the present world there would be an evolution, through temporal regeneration or the culture of advancing civilization, of a higher type of physical beauty than was at all compatible with the conditions of man's early existence upon earth; for the narrative in the book of Genesis and the records of human progress, supported by the outcome of scientific research, point to a time in our history when the Adamite, living in a state of nature in some suitable tropical climate, was altogether destitute of clothing. But we now know from a world-wide experience, if we can divest ourselves of early ingrained prejudice, that such a condition was incompatible with that fair white skin,

the slowly acquired product of that comparatively high degree of culture and civilization which advanced concomitantly with the great art of weaving. It was not in man's early irresponsible condition, but when knowledge dawned upon him, that his real progress began ; for then commenced the grand struggle between reason and the selfish instincts of an impulsive animal nature. In this stage we find the Adamite, apparently without the tropics, clad in skins, and, no doubt, supported in part by the products of the hunting-field.

Now, with regard to man's original colour, it must, of course, be admitted that under exceptional climatic combinations, of which we are not now cognizant, an original white race may have existed from which the dark races might afterwards have arisen, as the necessary result of climatic change coupled with his uncivilized primitive condition. And, indeed, the Scriptural statements concerning the Adamites are not unfavourable to this idea ; for the reputed founder is shown to be gifted with comparatively high moral perceptions, and with the clear intellect and innate religious nature of the highest phase of humanity.

But be this as it may, the present transition appears to be from dark to fair. When races, not destined to extinction, are brought within the pale of high civilization, colour is gradually, in the course of generations, found to give way. Even as regards Africans, the most deeply coloured of all races, many may be met with in India and elsewhere of a light olive colour, though still retaining the negro features and characteristic woolly hair of this great section of the African people. But it is in a tropical country like India, where civilization and barbarism have existed side by side for over two thousand years, that the subject of colour among races can be studied to advantage. In travelling through that country one is astonished at

the difference in the many shades of colour presented by the inhabitants; and the question as to the cause of these divers shades begins to force itself upon the attention of the inquirer. Fortunately the system of castes that prevails in the country furnishes a key towards the elucidation of this interesting subject.

But proceeding with our argument, it is an undoubted fact, that a white skin is characteristic of the great ruling race of mankind, and that intensity of colour is, on the other hand, characteristic of the lower races. It is not here intended to include among the latter such a people as the Hindoos, or to convey the impression that all Europeans are superior, or, indeed, equal to educated and high class Hindoos, with their pleasing and regular features, their polished manners, subtle intellect, liberality, and often princely munificence and thoughtful consideration for the claims of lower animals. And if these people, who, it would appear, were originally a comparatively fair race, have swayed for centuries between olive brown and white, and have not yet as a nation attained to the latter colour, it is not owing to their tropical climate, but to the modes of life which a tropical climate favours; and, perhaps, also to a partial blending by intermarriage with some of the aboriginal races of India, producing in this way many varieties of colour, such as we see at present in mixed races of Jews, Portuguese, and Hindoos. In the statement in the "Institutes of Menu," that "Indra divided the fields among his white complexioned friends" the Brahmins, we have not an indication of a wholly white race. but rather a proof that the conquering race, flowing in from the north, was comparatively fair when contrasted with the black aboriginal inhabitants of the land; but not fair in the European sense, with the parallel immigrations into South Africa, New

Zealand, Australia, and America, but rather, perhaps, more nearly resembling the irruption of the Israelites into the land of Canaan ; for it is further stated by Menu, that the conquered races were driven into the wilds or reduced to slavery ; and laid down also that the “Chandwalla, or impure, can never be relieved from bondage, though they be emancipated by a master ; for how can he whom God has destined to be the slave of the Brahmins be released from his bondage by man ?” Is it not so even still ? The European may build up the mighty pile of his civilization in the western plains of America, in the heart of New Zealand, or the wilds of Australia, but the aborigines will not enter its pale ; for the wave of extinction has reached them, and they are silently passing away on its flood !

But although many of the Hindoos have apparently degenerated—probably, in later times, with the degeneration of their religion—yet, on the other hand, there is a great and increasing section advancing under the stimulus of European civilization. The latter will no doubt at no distant day become altogether a white people, and ultimately become fused and blended with the other white races of the world ; for the evolution and increase of the latter will, everywhere, be in proportion to the onward march and spread of civilization. But the notion that a tropical climate is of itself, apart from the habits of uncivilized life, sufficient to cause and perpetuate a coloured race, is merely one of those popular beliefs founded rather on a hasty generalization than on a careful inquiry, for when we come to examine the matter we find that coloured races are not confined to the tropics, but extend north and south far beyond the tropics, even beyond the temperate zones ; while, on the other hand, different shades of colour between white, olive, and

black are found to exist everywhere within the tropics. In India, for example, in the same city or locality many may be met almost as dark as the ordinary negro; many, again, of a light olive colour; while a few show by their pale white complexions that they have practically passed the line which separates the coloured from the uncoloured individual.

Diversity of colour can only be accounted for by taking into consideration the different modes of life which have acted for centuries upon the various classes or castes of the country. Take, for instance, the Coolie classes which follow outdoor employment, labouring daily on public works or in the fields, with merely one narrow strip of cotton about the loins. They are, as must be expected, rude, illiterate, very uncultured, and deeply coloured. On the other hand, the better classes, including merchants, traders, and others who follow indoor employment, are many degrees fairer. The latter are, as a rule, fairly educated, and never appear out of doors without being thoroughly and suitably clothed. Among these classes, which comprise Brahmins and Parsees, individuals may be met with, especially among the Parsee priesthood, as fair as Europeans. It is not uncommon, moreover, to meet a few persons with light-coloured eyes and brown, or even sandy, hair and beard. It is also a very curious fact that as a rule, unlike the European, the face is fairer in colour than the other parts of the body. This peculiarity is very obvious and striking in some Hindoo children.

It will thus be seen the question of intensity of colour partly resolves itself into one of exposure, for we shall find that the deeply-coloured skin can best resist the burning effects of the direct rays of a tropical sun. This power of the coloured skin to resist the parching effects of the elements is not due

to the seasoning influence of long exposure, but to an inherent property in the skin itself; for coloured children of even less than a year old are usually carried about naked and otherwise exposed with the utmost impunity to the direct rays of a sun that would in a short time blister a white skin as effectually as the application of hot water. The dark skin does not become hot on exposure to the sun, but retains its coolness. It seems to be possessed of certain qualities which are altogether wanting in the white skin. There appears to be in the coloured skin a curious natural provision, whereby men have been enabled to live in every clime during the uncivilized ages of the world, for white races could not under any conditions of climate that we now know of exist under exposure to the elements. Even indoors in India, with the thermometer at 90° , the European could not remain for one day with his body altogether naked without inducing illness.

It is thus manifest that in all uncivilized communities a coloured skin is a necessity; it is Nature's provision for the well-being of uncivilized man, and is as needful to his condition as dark pigment is to the chambers of the eye. But in civilized states of society a coloured skin is unnecessary as a protection against the injurious and parching effects of the elements. The arts and luxuries of civilized life have enabled man to dispense with pigmentary colouring, which, being no longer necessary to his well-being, is removed, Nature granting him instead a pure white skin, of extreme delicacy and beauty when seen to advantage in its highest development.

But that the majority of the higher and wealthier classes in India are not now a white people is owing to their universal habit of remaining, especially in hot weather, when in or about their houses, partially

naked during the day-time, and to their allowing their children to go about the place at all times naked. Consequently it is only to be expected that Nature should still preserve to them that proportionate amount of colouring matter in the skin which the prevailing habits of life render necessary to the continued welfare of the body.

The ordinary variations of colour met with under like circumstances, and the occasional appearance of a child much fairer or darker than its fellows, seem to have some relation to the mental disposition of the individual—the fairer and more finely moulded in form appearing to be much more gifted as regards intellectual capacity. It may be noted also that in very uncivilized countries there is some relation between intensity of colour and a certain indifference to the nude condition. There seems to be in this respect an intellectual deficiency which of itself denotes inferiority of race. Those who would trace the great servile races of Africa to Ham may see perhaps in such inferiority a philosophic explanation of their servile condition other than the “curse” of Noah, which curse is plainly not the cause of their slavery, being rather, as we must think, a subtle and far-reaching enumeration of the untoward results which follow in the wake of a widespread national deterioration of intellect, induced through the voluntary abandonment and sacrifice of the nobler principles of humanity to the sordid dictates of selfishness and the vile pursuits of unrestrained animal inclination. For as all human progress is the result of a ceaseless struggle of man's higher instincts against the promptings of his lower animal nature, it follows that the relinquishing of this struggle must lead in turn to such deterioration and darkening of the intellect as will in time also bring about national and individual deterioration of

character, and corresponding deteriorations of body expressed by physical ugliness. The people collectively will more and more diverge from the transcendent beauty of the ideal human form; the flowing and symmetrical lines of the latter being replaced by divers unsymmetrical variations, rapidly passing into general ugliness of bodily outline and facial expression. Even such deteriorations of physical form are now common in the very heart of our European civilization. Side by side with the great ascending ranks of humanity are divers retrogressive and descending grades; and although this deterioration has hitherto been observed only in connection with the general moulding of the form, yet there is also present at times a certain muddiness of complexion and general coarseness of the skin which is altogether different from, though often combined with, that dusky turgescence which is the result of disease, in which latter condition the skin, in addition to its ordinary healthy function as an excreting membrane, is made use of to throw off the strange and peccant humours of the blood, which otherwise would spread within unseen and clog the wheels of life. But though there is thus apparently in all civilized countries a certain limited retrogressive series of individuals to be met with in every station of life, yet it is also apparent that the majority are in a state of progress; so that if we look for an example of a whole people in a state of mental and physical deterioration we must turn to some of the tribes of the South Sea Islands, or to the doomed aborigines of Australia. In the latter mental darkness, intensity of colour, and a physically deteriorated form are all combined.

With regard to the widespread belief that a cold northern or southern climate can produce and perpetuate a fair complexion, it must be borne in mind

that such climates have acted only indirectly, by stimulating man's inventive faculties, towards the devising of means to protect his body against the inclemency of the weather; but where man has braved the elements and gone naked, like the natives of the inhospitable Terra del Fuego, there is no approach made towards the attainment of a white skin. So long as man leads a rude uncivilized life, and persists in going about in a state of nudity, his coloured skin must be retained as one of the necessities of his condition, no matter in what latitude or locality he may be placed.

Now, on the other hand, if we find among the inhabitants of India shades of complexion so fair, that as regards colour the owners might pass for Europeans, side by side with those of deeper tints, which bear with impunity continued exposure to the burning sun of May, we can hardly maintain that climate is of itself the cause of coloured races. The statement also that Europeans who have long resided in India grow darker is altogether opposed to facts; for though there are what are called coloured Jews in India, yet the colour is the result of intermarriages with native converts to the Jewish religion, and is in no way to be attributed to the climate; for there is against this a colony of Jews, it is said, settled on the West Coast of India for some eighteen hundred years, yet they are still a fair people, but they have never intermarried with any of the neighbouring coloured tribes as the others seem to have done. There are also some Jews and other settlers of divers extraction who have resided for centuries in India, yet they show no signs of reverting to the coloured type. For seeing that colour is a necessity in the case of uncivilized man, it is almost certain that all the white races now extant have slowly arisen with the rise of civilization,

for although it may be contended that a white child may be born of coloured parents, without passing through any transition as in the case of Albinos, yet from what we see going on at the present time we know that this is not the way in which white races have arisen; for such children during the early uncivilized ages of the world would have died as soon as they were exposed uncovered to the action of the elements. For even in the case of Albino children born of coloured Hindoo parents, it would appear that experience has taught the Hindoos that such children must be at all times clothed from infancy. It is very interesting to see an Albino Hindoo child at play with other children of the same age. All the latter are as a rule entirely naked, but the former is provided with a long loose cotton gown, made like a shirt, buttoning tightly around the neck. It is moreover not at all certain, though it is very probable, that a gradual relapse into barbarism would slowly produce a coloured from an uncoloured race. The change would no doubt be necessary if the race were to be preserved from extinction; but it is a question whether the white skin being once attained reversion were possible; for there is no evidence to show there has been at any time a reversion of white to coloured races; but, as we have seen, there is abundant proof that there has been a constant and gradual change from a dark to a fair complexion.

To set this concisely and clearly before the view, let us look to the Brahmins, or better, perhaps, to the Parsees of India. Among the latter, many are very fair, and a few individuals, especially among the priesthood, have lost all trace of colour, as may be seen in their fair complexions and their light sandy hair and beard. None of these people have any mixture of European blood in their veins. Bearing all the facts in mind, we are forced to ask ourselves—

Were the Parsees originally a coloured or an uncoloured race? One of the two they must have been, and either alternative proves that colour gradually changes in the course of centuries. But when we consider that a white skin was incompatible with the early uncivilized states through which man has passed, we are led rather to believe that the Parsees have been derived from an original coloured race, from which they have slowly progressed towards the attainment of a fair complexion. This belief is also in harmony with their history; for it is among their priesthood that we find the greatest proportion of fair complexioned men; and to account for this, let it be borne in mind that heretofore the priesthood were the only learned class, and that they isolated themselves to some extent and married chiefly within their own class; and we must think further, that they were particular in being at all times attired in the white robes of their calling, while their followers were in all probability not nearly so particular about being dressed on all occasions. Hence, it is only to be expected that the priesthood are, as a class, found to be fairer in complexion than the majority of their followers.

But lately, the spread of European civilization in India has changed this previous relation of the one class to the other; all the higher and richer classes, including the Brahmins and Parsees, are becoming every generation lighter in colour. The priesthood are no longer the sole recipients of learning and culture; for culture and intellectual refinement, no less than a suitable wardrobe, are great and indispensable factors in the evolution and perpetuation, not only of that pure white and delicate complexion which is the triumph of civilization, but of that fine and beautifully moulded form which is the crowning glory of the human race!

But this state of high culture and mental refinement,

on which so much depends in the evolution of higher and more perfect types of physical beauty, has hitherto in most countries been confined to the rich and governing classes. The necessarily rude and illiterate condition of the body of the people, and the unremitting toil to supply the daily wants of life, were at all times prejudicial to the progress of the masses in this direction. But nevertheless, through the privileged classes, and especially through the unavoidably circumscribed aristocracy of learning and intellectual culture existing in isolated centres since the dawn of history, has descended that great leaven which shall in time leaven the whole mass of humanity. For many centuries has this great dumb, inarticulate multitude fought and toiled and slaved, until at length, in these present years, they are being slowly emancipated with us here in Europe and with our kindred beyond the sea—emancipated, not from senates, kings, presidents, and rulers, or whatsoever they may be called, but from the abject life of toil and the intolerable bonds of ignorance which have so long kept them in slavery. The bondage-breaking light of Science has now dawned upon the world; her lamp, more wonderful than that of Aladdin, has now, at length, called up and bound the long-reluctant genii of Nature's vast and weird repositories of force and made them over unto man, his willing slaves for ever; her girding bands now compass land and sea; the latter no longer as a barrier separates the nations, but is, in this respect, as though it were not, as though the Apocalyptic prophecy of "no sea" were even now, in a figurative sense, being realized in this our current age; her mighty wand, more potent than the necromancer's rod, has smote the earth, and lo! long hoarded treasures of incalculable wealth lie open in the light of day, that men may help themselves if

they are worthy of the gifts that science thus so freely gives, the heritage of all.

Man's power of production, by the aid of science multiplied ten thousand times or more, has brought the accumulated learning of ages and the essential luxuries of life almost within reach of all grades of artisans and workmen. That primal sentence, "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," has borne heavily upon mankind from the beginning. The inhabitants of the earth, groaning under the yoke of inordinate labour, have sped down the ages until now, like that "Wandering Jew" whom a life of unremitting toil had so soured and hardened that he felt not for the misery of his fellows, and repulsed with brutal harshness. One who, bowed down with suffering, would rest a moment by the stone bench where he pursued his daily labour. Nevertheless, his hard life is not admitted in palliation of his unfeeling act, for he is doomed, perhaps in mercy rather than in punishment, to toil and wander on upon the earth until at length the nobler instincts of human sympathy and love, prevailing in their turn, shall have for ever changed his nature and emancipated him from the self-wrought thralldom of narrow and unfeeling selfishness.

So, too, the vast toiling multitudes have journeyed on from century to century, at all times furnishing from their midst some small quota to the more fortunate possessors of learning, wealth, and sovereignty, receiving in return from the ranks of the latter many whom fortune returned to a life of toil, until in time, under the influence of Christianity, a more sympathetic and humane disposition began to pervade the entire body of the people. This very marked and widespread change for the better was the dawn of a brighter day, for then the clouded intellects of men grew clear, and from the ranks of labour chiefly sprang

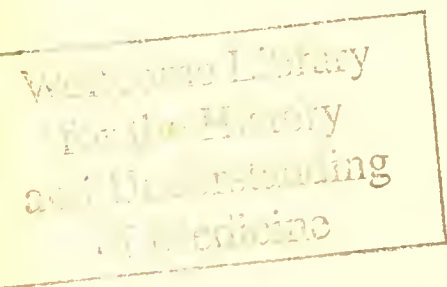
the noble pioneers of the army of inventors which now, in due time, have arrived to emancipate the masses from their wonted lives of toil. Watt, Stephenson, Arkwright, and their successors have, by substituting intellectual power for excessive manual drudgery, ennobled labour and made it compatible with the pursuits of knowledge, science, and the higher arts which tend so much unto the culture of the mind. The days are nearing when artisans and workmen can go forth at times and look upon the grand and lovely scenes which beautify the surface of our earth, and cultivators of the soil, collecting from their peaceful homesteads, come into the cities and enjoy an intellectual treat at opera or play, or wander through the treasures of science or of art.

Such is the glorious heritage within the reach of men if they continue to advance thereto and prove themselves worthy to possess the same; for nought can be enjoyed aright without the mental aptitude that kindly sympathies and nobler instincts give. This is imperative; but still it is apparent that although such treasures are almost within the grasp of the people, vast multitudes debar themselves fruition by raising interposing barriers of selfishness, widespread intemperance, falsehood, trickery, and sordid avarice. Even as the gathering vapours of the coming storm spread ominously their pall-like shrouds across the azure heavens, excluding day, till shivered by the rending lightning, of their own noxious confluence engendered, and swept once more by whirlwinds away, so is our social atmosphere now closing round to dim the brightness of our hopes. May it be gently cleared before the whole be overcast, for in the fury of the tempest shall the gathering clouds dissolve when once their murky masses come into collision, driven by opposing winds.

But irrespective of these home-brewed visitations, which burst betimes like a storm to clear away the noxious vapours of a nation's moral atmosphere, there is a retributive penalty, still more subtle and terrible, which manifests itself in a gradual deterioration of the whole mental and bodily constitution—a result for which no accumulation, however vast, of worldly riches can, in the remotest degree, compensate the individual, for not only are the intellectual powers injured, but the change, which begins in the mind, also extends itself to the physical organization, producing a deteriorated type of facial and bodily configuration ; and, more striking still, the man himself does not suffer singly, but his vitiated nature is transmitted to his descendants. “ The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,” is no mere literary phrase, but a truth of mighty import, resting on psychological and physiological data : men are gradually deprived in their descendants, if not also to a great extent in their own persons, not only of the grace and beauty of form of which they are unworthy, but of the intellect which they abuse, the conscience which they juggle with, and the human sympathies which they repress, urged by the promptings of blind avarice and the pampered selfishness of undiscerning animal propensity.

They who would enrich themselves by chicanery and lying knavery, drawing into the maw of avarice not only the savings but the hard-earned wages of humble and industrious families, know not what they do ! They are to be pitied as well as despised, for they are thus crippling and deforming the soul as well as the body ; and in many cases all the more by their blaspheming Everlasting Truth in crying “ God a mercy,” trying to drag Heaven along with them. They have chosen their portion here and hereafter ;

they have elected to crawl upon the earth when they might have soared unto the heavens ; for who can expect the poor maimed caterpillar to change into the unblemished butterfly, which, feeding upon the nectar of sweet flowers, for ever flits to and fro bathed in the glorious light of a summer sun? The poor injured thing must wearily creep upon the earth while its fellows, like radiant gems, disport themselves upon the wing in full enjoyment of the perfect life. So man, if he elect to sell the birthright of his nobler nature for a mess of the world's pottage, must wander here or in the shades of Tartarus till perfected, if perfected he be. Not all the hoarded wealth wrung from out the hands of penury would suffice to purchase one, even the least, of those kindling emotions which often light up the countenance of the deserving as with the brightness of a momentary transfiguration—emotions, too, that may be, and are, alike the silent mental monitors of the retired student, the unknown artist, and the humble peasant boy, whom they continually ennoble till, in time, the body bears the impress of the burning soul within, and both advance some little way towards the radiant beauty of the Perfect Man, the Archetype in whom is realized the glorious Image of the Deity !!



BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

HUMANITY AND THE MAN.

"There are some very fine passages in this poem; but its humanizing tendency and spirit are its best qualities."—*Public Opinion*.

"It has also a substratum of serious and even often remarkably suggestive thought."—*Literary Churchman*.

"The author has drawn upon his Eastern experience, and describes Eastern scenery, &c., with vividness."—*Peterborough Advertiser*.

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"The work displays no small amount of knowledge, whilst its philosophy is highly commendable, and further interesting volumes may fairly be expected from so able a pen."—*Birmingham Daily Gazette*.

"We have treated at some length Dr. Sharpe's poem, because, setting aside many obvious imperfections, the work is a masterly production and one we can recommend to our readers with the greatest confidence."—*Hampshire Telegraph*.

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